

Note No: TXN 395/008

The Head of Protocol Division presents his compliments to Their Excellencies the High Commissioners and Ambassadors and to Acting High Commissioners and Chargés d'Affaires in the United Kingdom, and has the honour to enclose for their information and that of their Governments copies of the Rules governing the acceptance and wearing of foreign Orders, Decorations and Medals by citizens of the United Kingdom and her Overseas Territories.

It should be noted that paragraphs 13, 14 and 15 apply to United Kingdom citizens who are employed in the service of the Crown, and who therefore in most cases may not receive foreign awards. Conditions also apply to the acceptance and wearing of the insignia of foreign and also certain Commonwealth Orders, decorations and medals by United Kingdom citizens who are not employed in the service of the Crown.

Paragraphs 1 and 7 of the Rules request that before any award of a national honour is made to a UK citizen, HM Government should be consulted (through Honours Secretariat, Protocol Division). In most cases agreement is given, but there are unfortunately some cases where the Rules may still preclude a UK citizen from accepting a foreign award. Prior informal consultation with Protocol Division's Honours Secretariat helps to avoid potential embarrassment or disappointment. It would be appreciated if when Embassies write they would provide the following information:

- Full name, address and occupation of the intended recipient
- Description of the proposed honour
- Brief details of the reasons for its award.

The Head of Protocol Division would be grateful if Heads of Mission would also remind their Governments as necessary that the Rules preclude the Heads of Her Majesty's Diplomatic and Consular Missions overseas, or members of their staffs, from accepting any foreign awards, including on the occasion of their final departure from post.

The Head of Protocol Division avails himself of this opportunity to express to Their Excellencies the High Commissioners and Ambassadors and to Acting High Commissioners and Chargés d'Affaires in the United Kingdom the assurance of his highest consideration.



FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

14 March 2003

RULES GOVERNING THE ACCEPTANCE AND WEARING OF FOREIGN ORDERS, DECORATIONS AND MEDALS BY CITIZENS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM AND HER OVERSEAS TERRITORIES

These rules set out the circumstances under which a citizen of the United Kingdom or her Overseas Territories ("UK citizen") may be granted The Sovereign's permission to accept and wear an Order, Decoration or Medal ("foreign award") conferred by a Head of State or Government of a foreign country, Head of Government of a Commonwealth country of which The Sovereign is not Head of State and certain international organisations (collectively referred to as "foreign state").

Principles

1. No UK citizen¹ may accept and wear a foreign award without The Sovereign's permission. Such permission must be sought as soon as there is an indication that an award may be offered.
2. The granting of permission for a UK citizen to accept an award offered by a foreign state will only be considered if the award recognises specified services rendered to the interests of that foreign state.
3. Permission will not be given for UK citizens to accept a foreign award if they have received, or are expected to receive, a UK award for the same services.
4. Acceptance of a foreign award does not mean that the UK will make a reciprocal offer directly or indirectly associated with the UK recipient.

¹ This includes British subjects and British-protected persons (BPPs). BPPs may accept awards conferred by their Rulers.

Permission

5. Permission to wear a foreign award, if granted, will be either:
 - **unrestricted** – allowing the award to be worn on any occasion; or
 - **restricted** – allowing the award to be worn only on particular occasions associated with the foreign state that conferred it.
6. The grant of permission, whether unrestricted or restricted, will be conveyed by letter to the UK citizen concerned from the The Sovereign's Private Secretary.

Application

7. A foreign state wishing to confer an award on a UK citizen is expected to ascertain – through its Diplomatic Representative at The Court of St James's – whether permission to accept an award would be likely to be given. Such requests for clearance will only be entertained in respect of awards given by Heads of State or Governments recognised as such by The Sovereign.
8. Requests made by certain international organisations (e.g., the United Nations and NATO) in respect of service in operations under their auspices should be made to the Defence Services Secretary in the Ministry of Defence.
9. Requests made in respect of services rendered more than five years previously, or in connection with events in the distant past (e.g., commemorative awards), will not be entertained.

10. Requests for clearance meeting the requirement of these regulations will be submitted to The Sovereign for consideration by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs – who will be under no obligation to make such a submission if the application has not been made as indicated in paragraphs 7 and 8 above.
11. Requests for clearance in the case of foreign awards conferred by private societies or institutions will not be granted.

Guidelines

12. Each request will be treated on a case by case basis. The fact that a similar application has been approved in the past should not be taken as implying that permission will be granted.
13. The grant of unrestricted permission will be considered in the case of foreign awards conferred for services:
 - related to the saving or attempting to save life²;
 - by any member of the UK Armed Forces or other UK official on exchange, attachment or loan to a foreign state who is involved in a military operation or an emergency³ on behalf of that country, state or organisation;
 - by any member of the UK Armed Forces serving in a UK Unit within a bi-lateral force under the command of the other country who renders especial service to the country's forces in a military operation or emergency; or

² Including medals issued by life saving societies and institutions (but these must be worn on the right breast).

³ It will be for the UK to decide if the operations or emergency is of the standard to fall within this criterion.

- in military operations under the auspices of an international organisation (e.g., the United Nations).
14. The grant of restricted permission will be considered in the case of foreign awards conferred:
- on the occasion of and in connection with a State or official visit by a Head of State or Government of a foreign or Commonwealth country;
 - in connection with a State visit by The Sovereign; or
 - to members of Special Missions when The Sovereign is represented at a coronation, wedding or funeral or other similar occasion; or on any Diplomatic Representative⁴ when specially accredited to represent The Sovereign on such occasions.
15. Other than in circumstances described in paragraphs 13 and 14 above, permission, unrestricted or restricted, will not be granted to⁵:
- Crown, civil and most categories of public servants generally;
 - in particular, to Heads or other members of HM Diplomatic or Consular establishments abroad when leaving their posts – whether on transfer or on final retirement;
 - senior officials, military and civilian, visiting foreign states; and
 - British citizens working as officials in international organisations.
16. No permission is needed for the acceptance of any foreign award if it is designed not to be worn.

⁴ This does not apply to his or her staff.

⁵ This guidance normally applies equally to the spouses or partners of Crown servants. (Revised October 2006)